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SIPDIS

STATE FOR EAP/CM, AIAG, OES/IHA, MED, CA/OCS/ACS/EAP  
STATE PASS TO USAID FOR ANE AND GH  
HHS FOR OGHA/STEIGER AND PASS TO NIH/FIC  
CDC FOR COGH AND DIV-FLU  
DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE FOR OSD/ISA/AP  
USDA PASS TO APHIS, FAS (OSTA AND OCRA), FSIS  
BANGKOK FOR RMO, CDC, USAID  
BEIJING FOR HHS, CDC, RMO  
PHNOM PENH FOR CDC INFLUENZA COORDINATOR  
VIENTIANE FOR CDC INFLUENZA COORDINATOR

SENSITIVE

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [TBIO](#) [EAGR](#) [PINR](#) [KFLU](#) [CH](#)

SUBJECT: Border Control - AI Prevention at the China-Vietnam Border

REF: A) Hanoi 0197, B) Hong Kong 1034, C) Hong Kong 1061, D)  
Guangzhou 0160, E) Guangzhou 0351

¶1. (U) Summary: With a 1,020 kilometers border running between south China's Guangxi province and north Vietnam, authorities on both sides have a lot of issues to contend with, many of them health-related. This especially includes cross-border avian influenza (AI) prevention and control cooperation - ranging from public awareness campaigns to data sharing. Cooperative efforts in Dongxing, a key Chinese border town, are advancing, but it is a slow process hindered by obstacles such as a porous border, a low degree of public health awareness, and inconsistent inter-agency cooperation within Dongxing city. Clearly, in the minds of the Chinese in Dongxing, cross-border prevention efforts would be improved further if Vietnam invested more in upgrading their system of data collection and surveillance, increased general awareness among the public about prevention methods, and strengthened other cross-border capabilities. End Summary.

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Poultry Smuggling Across the Guangxi-Quang Ninh Border  
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¶2. (SBU) People living in border provinces in south China and Vietnam are particularly concerned about the threat of Avian Influenza originating from illegally smuggled poultry. Border towns like Guangxi's Dongxing are, as a result, strengthening their AI preparedness. While opinions on the origin of the AI threat, and in which direction poultry is being trafficked, may differ on each side of the border, Dongxing authorities maintain that Guangxi is at great risk due to the condition of poultry in neighboring Quang Ninh province, Vietnam, which suffered AI outbreaks in March. Local authorities claim that because the price of chicken in the Vietnamese market is lower, live chickens are likely to be smuggled into China for sale on the local black market.

¶3. (SBU) According to Zhang Shaoheng, Director of Dongxing's Customs Bureau, an average of seventy poultry smuggling cases -

including live and frozen products - are reported each year. Chen Libiao, Director of the Dongxing Entry-Exit Inspection and Quarantine Bureau (CIQ) stated that since 2004, 213 smuggling cases have been detected by Dongxing authorities. The majority of seizure cases at official checkpoints involve frozen poultry products. (Note: while AI transmission is relatively low in frozen poultry, local authorities still seize these products if they are suspected to have originated from an AI endemic area. End Note). It is likely that the majority of live poultry shipments are transported across unchecked entry points. This is a major monitoring challenge; the volume of trafficked products is unknown. Chen told us the number of new smuggling cases has remained at a relatively stable level in recent years.

14. (SBU) Threat control measures extend beyond the border itself and into the local community. When there is an AI outbreak in a neighboring Vietnam province, all local Chinese poultry markets along the Guangxi-Quang Ninh border are immediately shut down. In addition, Dongxing currently prohibits its residents from trading or purchasing illegal poultry, however, the effectiveness of this policy, or the extent to which it is enforced is unknown. Being able to purchase low cost poultry is a likely deterrent. According to authorities, every fifth household is required to sign accountability agreements to enforce this policy, and to encourage individual monitoring and reporting of illicit activities. Zhang claims that the Customs Bureau's most successful control efforts are initiated by tips from the public.

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Cross-Border Cooperation

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15. (SBU) Since the Guangxi-Quang Ninh border lacks natural barriers, is crisscrossed by secret smuggling routes, and has a lax monitoring standard, it is difficult to reduce the volume of smuggled poultry. For Dongxing authorities, the first line of defense is the border checkpoint. On the Dongxing side, there are only seven primary checkpoints and approximately twenty-five additional border trading areas, clearly inadequate for effectively monitoring the estimated three million annual border crossings with the limited resources and a small staff of seventy available to local authorities. Current AI prevention efforts include cross-border literature dissemination, body temperature monitoring, sporadic poultry vaccinations, emergency drills, and personnel training to increase detection capabilities. In the long-term, Dongxing CIQ is planning to implement a mandatory border immunization program, in which all poultry located within 30-km of the border will be immunized, covering poultry both raised in Dongxing and declared as entering from Vietnam.

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Local Preparedness From the Top Down

16. (SBU) In spite of these geographical and resource challenges, Chen Libiao states that there have been modest improvements in cross-border transmission prevention policies, across several levels of government. Dongxing CIQ and their Vietnamese counterparts in Mong Cai hold weekly meetings to exchange surveillance information and emergency planning practices. Guangxi's CIQ and Vietnam's Quang Ninh provinces also established a memorandum of understanding to enhance joint prevention capabilities, including mutual AI case notification. Chen stated that if Vietnam reports a case of H5N1, Dongxing authorities are required to notify Guangxi's Provincial CIQ within two hours; they will in turn notify Beijing's General Administration of Quality Supervision, Inspection and Quarantine (AQSIQ) Headquarters within another two hours.

17. (U) At the provincial level, Guangxi CIQ Director General Hang Tao has spearheaded an AI taskforce, including the creation of an expert panel and an emergency disinfection team. At the local level, Dongxing CIQ, the Customs Bureau, the Husbandry and Veterinary Bureau, Center for Disease Control (CDC) and the Agriculture Bureau have formed a joint prevention network through

which Dongxing authorities operate three AI action plans:  
-- the HPAI Port Preparedness Plan,  
-- the Major Animal Disease Prevention at Ports Plan, and  
-- the General Emergency Response Plan.

¶18. (SBU) Dongxing's prevention methods also include the control of potential public health emergencies. Director Wu of the Dongxing Health Bureau told us that Guangxi has an established endemic disease control reporting system, whereby if an outbreak of a reportable disease were to occur, all relevant departments in Dongxing would have access to the online reporting system, and would establish 24-hour duty offices to maintain timely communication. If a human AI case were to be detected, Dongxing health authorities would be required to report the case and forward samples collected to the provincial-level Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) in Guangxi within six hours.

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Challenges  
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¶19. (SBU) According to Chen Libiao, cross-border prevention efforts would be improved further if his Vietnamese counterparts invested more in upgrading their system of data collection and surveillance, increased general awareness among the public about prevention

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methods, and strengthened cross-border information collection and surveillance capabilities. In addition, Chen complained that Dongxing faces several internal problems in which inter-agency cooperation among the town's governmental departments is hindered by a failure by some departments to carry out their assigned duties in a timely manner.

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Comment  
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¶10. (SBU) Despite Dongxing CIQ Director Chen's emphasis on increased levels of cross-border governmental cooperation and local prevention, progress is slow and unquantifiable. The lack of capacity to control the borders, and a dearth of knowledge regarding border activities, pose a continuous challenge to overall AI prevention efforts.

¶11. (U) This cable was coordinated with Embassy Beijing.

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